

REMARKS

Careful consideration has been given by the applicants to the Examiner's comments and rejection of various of the claims, as set forth in the outstanding Office Action, and favorable reconsideration and allowance of the application, as amended, is earnestly solicited.

Applicants gratefully note the Examiner's indication that at least Claims 19 and 20 are considered to be directed to allowable subject matter and would be allowed if either rewritten in independent form or incorporated into an allowable main claim.

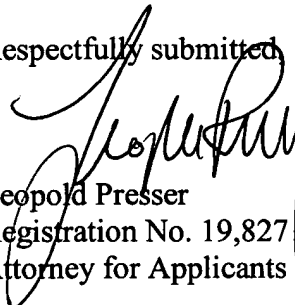
Concerning the Examiner's formal grounds of rejection of the claims, in view of erroneous dependencies, which were previously inadvertently incorporated into the claims, appropriate amendatory action has been taken to correct the dependencies of Claims 16-18, 20 and 21, as previously discussed with the Examiner. In particular, Claims 16-18 are now dependent from Claim 15, whereas Claims 20 and 21 are also dependent from Claim 15 and Claim 20, respectively.

Furthermore, in view of the allowability of Claims 19-21, applicants have incorporated the limitation of allowable Claim 19 into Claim 15, and also amended the remaining dependencies, thereby in essence, placing all of the claims into condition for allowance.

Predicated on the foregoing, these claims clearly and patentably distinguish over Stearns, et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,160,705, and in view of providing claims which are deemed to be allowable by the Examiner, the necessity for a further detailed discussion of Stearns, et al. has been rendered moot.

Accordingly, the early issuance of the Notice of Allowance by the Examiner is earnestly solicited. However, in the event that the Examiner has any queries concerning the instantly submitted Amendment, applicants' attorney respectfully requests that he be accorded the courtesy of possibly a telephone conference to discuss any matters in need of attention.

Respectfully submitted,



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